

for sub-speciation or speciation to take place. Frequently several closely related species can be found within relatively small areas. The remarkable levels to which the situation has evolved in the Cape can best be seen in the Lycaenidae. Almost every mountain range, of which there are many, has produced its own species or subspecies. (Some authorities in South Africa are of the opinion that in past years there has been an over-enthusiasm for describing new subspecies. It is now considered that many of the so-called subspecies previously described are merely based upon characters which are not genetically constant.) Fires may have aided in the process of speciation by creating barriers of “inhospitable” land between the mountain ranges and even by the elimination of intermediates. Fires are such a common event, although irregular in occurrence, that certain plant groups have evolved to require the presence of smoke and/or burning of the seed coat to stimulate seed germination. Fires have thus become an integral and important part of the ecology of the region (Pringle 1994) and are essential for the continuation of the *fynbos* flora. The recent very high levels of UV-B radiation, which result from South Africa’s close proximity to holes in the ozone layer, might also be responsible for chromosome/DNA damage in insects and resulting genetic aberrations. Studies of the genetic aberrations and range of variation within a species population may help us comprehend more fully the processes of speciation and evolution within the genus.

References

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Red-headed Chestnut *Conistra erythrocephala* (D.& S.) (Lep. Noctuidae): The first Devon specimen since 1906

A male Red-headed Chestnut was taken at light by Andy Trout at Shaugh Prior, Dartmoor on 12 February 2004. The identification was confirmed by myself and the specimen has been retained in my collection.

Parfitt (1878. *The Fauna of Devon Lepidoptera*, Vol. 10. Devonshire Association) says that one example was taken at sugar on 5 November 1856 at Ivybridge, and that this was the second specimen taken in England. Barrett (1906. *Victoria County History of Devon*) repeats this record, and adds “Honiton” with no date. Stidston (1952. *A List of the Lepidoptera of Devon*, Part 1 and introduction) repeats the claim that the 1856 record was the second in England and adds that the captor of this specimen was J. J. Reading.— ROY MCCORMICK, 36 Paradise Road, Teignmouth, Devon TQ14 8NR.